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Warfighter Training Division chief retires

by 2nd Lt. J. Elaine Hunnicutt, AFRL Public Affairs

MESA, Ariz. — Col. Jerald “Jerry” Straw, Air Force Research Laboratory Warfighting Training Research Division chief, retired June 28 from active duty. He has served his country as an Air Force member for 37 years, both in the Air National Guard and active duty.

He earned his commission from Officer Training School in April 1973, as an honor graduate, and has continued that level of excellence throughout his career.

Straw left new troops with food for thought. “I think the best advice I could give anyone would be two rules I learned as a child from my parents, and what I think the Air Force’s Core Values can be boiled down to. Always do your absolute best, no matter what the task, whether snack bar officer, pilot or chief of staff; and always treat others (including your service and country) the way you would want to be treated.”

Most currently having directed research and development for the warfighters out of Mesa, Ariz. he ended his long career in the same state he grew up in and went to college. He graduated from the University of Arizona in 1972, earning a bachelor’s degree in biology.

As the commander at his most recent assignment, he oversaw the process of “ensuring optimum solutions for real-world training requirements” and manages a \$38 million budget while guiding a staff of more than 180 military, government civilian and contractor employees.

During his career, he served as an operational weapons system instructor, lead-in fighter training flight instructor, executive officer, squadron commander, assistant professor and course director at the Air Force Academy, chief of fighter programs at USAFE, chief of bases and units at Space Command, and Deputy Director of Plans and Programs at USAFE.

Straw ended his career with an assignment that has a direct impact on the warfighter. “The best thing about the lab is being part of a world-class team that is truly transforming the way the Air Force and the other services are doing training and will do training in the future,” Straw said.

“It has been demonstrated repeatedly, that in warfare ... training is key,” as he referenced the Navy kill ratios in Vietnam and how they improved from 2 to 1, to 12 to 1 when ‘Top Gun’ training was instituted.

“I believe the ultimate realization of Distributed Mission Training (linked multi-ship simulators that provide a Red Flag training scenario in cyberspace), invented and currently being expanded by HEA, will have a similar transformational impact on combat capability,” Straw said.

Straw reminded his troops to keep up the “great world-class” work they are doing. “Continually identify what the training future can be and then create it, and always remember the vision—provide the world’s best training tools, ensuring warfighters have the skills to win.” @